

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

TRSE-00 EB-07 COME-00 AGR-05 /071 W

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R 161516Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5018

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS 0185

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 27039

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT, FR

SUBJECT: ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MAKES FIRST VISIT TO
PARIS

REF: ROME 15028

1. MAIN OUTCOME OF ITALIAN FONMIN FORLANI'S VISIT TO
PARIS, WHICH FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY AFTER BEETSTERZWAAG
MEETING OF THE EC FOREIGN MINISTERS, WAS ELYSEE ANNOUNCE-
MENT THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD HAD ACCEPTED AN INVITATION
TO VISIT ITALY AT THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER.

2. SINCE THEN ELYSEE HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO UNDERSCORE
THE SYMBOLIC, AND PERHAPS CONCRETE IMPORTANCE OF THIS
VISIT. THUS, ELYSEE ANNOUNCED JUNE 16 THAT GISCARD HAD
"STRESSED FRANCE'S COMPREHENSION OF ITALY'S PROBLEMS"
AND "THE SUPPORT IT IS READY TO PROVIDE IN ORDER TO
RESOLVE THEM" AT MEETING OF THE FRENCH COUNCIL OF MINIS-
TERS. ADDRESSEES WILL RECALL VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL PHRASE
USED BY LECANUET DURING LATTER'S RECENT VISIT TO ROME AT
TIME OF ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT'S FORMATION.

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3. QUAI ITALIAN DESK (DEBENEST) SAYS GISCARD VISIT HAD

BEEN UNDER CONSIDERATION SINCE LAST SPRING, BUT HAD BEEN PUT OFF UNTIL AFTER ITALIAN ELECTIONS. TIMING IN NOVEMBER IS INTENDED GIVE ANDREOTTI MAXIMUM PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT WHILE HE HAS INITIATIVE. ON OTHER HAND QUAI WAS ONCE MORE VAGUE AS TO SIGNIFICANCE OF GOF'S NOW REITERATED ASSERTION OF "SUPPORT" WHICH FRANCE IS READY TO PROVIDE. DEBENEST CLAIMS THIS WAS NOT DISCUSSED IN FORLANI'S MEETING WITH GUIRINGAUD AS FAR AS QUAI STAFF AWARE, BUT ADDED POINTEDLY THAT SHE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR FORLANI'S MEETING WITH GISCARD. DEBENEST LEFT IMPRESSION, SUPPORTED BY RENEWED ELYSEE EMPHASIS ON WORD "SUPPORT", THAT GOF MAY IN FACT BE PREPARED TO MAKE SOME KIND OF DIRECT OR INDIRECT BUT STILL CONCRETE EFFORTS ON ITALY'S BEHALF. IF SO, DETAILS WILL PRESUMABLY BE SURFACED DURING GISCARD'S VISIT.

4. AS FOR FORLANI'S OWN VISIT, DEBENEST SAID THAT NOT TOO MUCH MORE HAD HAPPENED. BOTH ITALIANS AND FRENCH EMPHASIZED THAT THIS, FORLANI'S FIRST FOREIGN VISIT, WAS TO FRANCE, A POINT ALWAYS APPRECIATED IN PARIS. IN FACT HE STAYED LESS THAN ONE DAY AND TALKED TO GUIRINGAUD LESS THAN ONE HOUR. IN ADDITION TO CONTINUING THE DISCUSSION OF EUROPEAN ISSUES FROM BEETSTERZWAAG MEETING, DEBENEST SAID OTHER THEMES WERE LARGELY MEDITERRANEAN, RANGING FROM LEBANON VIA CYPRUS TO MALTA. MINISTERS ALSO DISCUSSED KEY BILATERAL ISSUES, SPECIFICALLY WINE, VEGETABLES, SHOES AND PROBABLY ITALY'S ROLE IN COREDIF, THE SECOND URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANT, FRANCE HAS JUST ANNOUNCED, IN WHICH THE ITALIANS HAVE 25 PERCENT INTEREST.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 27039

5. AS FOR QUAI'S OWN ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT ITALIAN SITUATION DEBENEST SAID THAT, WHILE ITALY NOW AGAIN HAD A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TIME, THIS WAS REALLY ITS "LAST CHANCE," AND QUAI ON BALANCE REMAINED PESSIMISTIC. IN ONE, OR AT MOST, TWO YEARS WHICH MIGHT BE GRANTED PRESENT GOVERNMENT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS "MIGHT" BE ABLE TO REFORM THEMSELVES SUFFICIENTLY TO RESTORE THEIR IMAGE. HOWEVER CHANCES WERE NOT GOOD. THE PCI ON OTHER HAND IS NOT LIKELY TO SUFFER ANY SIGNIFICANT LOSS OF SUPPORT DURING THIS TIME. (DEBENEST WENT SO FAR AS TO CALL PCI CONQUEST OF VOTES PRACTICALLY "IRREVERSIBLE".) ONLY BASIC ALTERNATIVE TO POLARIZATION, WHICH PCI NOT NOW SEEKING BUT WHICH IT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO AVOID, WOULD THEREFORE BE EVENTUAL NEW CENTER-LEFT SOLUTION INVOLVING SOCIALISTS. BUT LATTER HAVE BEEN SO WEAKENED AND DIS-CREDITED THAT SUCH SOLUTION, EVEN IF POSSIBLE, MIGHT NOT BE DESIRABLE. QUAI THEREFORE CONCLUDES THAT NOW (AND NOT NEXT SPRING) IS TIME TO SUPPORT ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, WHOSE PROGRAM, WHILE NOT ORIGINAL, IS CONSIDERED TO BE SERIOUS. THIS IS LOGIC WHICH EVIDENTIY UNDERLIES TIMING
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CURRENT FRENCH GESTURES OF SUPPORT, INCLUDING GISCARD VISIT.

6. WHAT IS LESS CLEAR, DEBENEST CONCLUDED, SPEAKING OFF-THE-RECORD, IS WHETHER WESTERN COUNTRIES (INCLUDING FRANCE) WILL IN FACT BE ABLE TO MUSTER THE NECESSARY WILL TO MAKE THE EFFORT TO HELP BRING ABOUT GENUINE EASING OF ITALIAN PROBLEM, WHICH IN THE NATURE OF THINGS OUGHT TO BE LARGELY ECONOMIC. COMMENT: AS FAR AS FRANCE IS CONCERNED, SUCH EFFORT WILL BE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT IN PERIOD WHEN NEW BARRE GOVERNMENT'S MISSION IS TO TIGHTEN BELTS. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT SUPPORT GISCARD WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE.
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